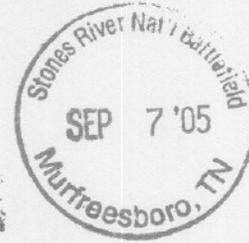


1540 Alto Drive
San Bernardino, CA 92404
30 August 2005

Stones River National Battlefield
35001 Old Nashville Highway
Murfreesboro, TN 37129



Museum Personnel,

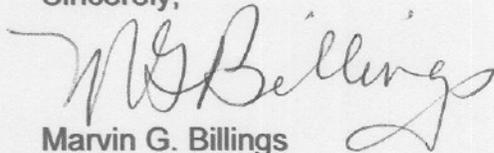
Enclosed are photo copies of letters from Elliott Herman Benton to his six-seven year-old daughter Stella Genevieve Benton. Elliott Benton was my great grandfather and Stella Benton was my grandmother. The letters were written when Elliott Benton was serving in the union forces and stationed in your area. Information about him is as follows:

"Elliott Benton raised a family of eleven children. When the Civil War started he enlisted 14 September 1861 in Co. B, 10th Wisconsin infantry volunteers for three years. He passed through the various ranks and in 1863 was commissioned 1st Lt. and Quartermaster. He was discharged Octob1864 and then reenlisted in November and was appointed 1st Lt. in Hancock's Corps. He served one year then was assigned to Camp Chase, Ohio where he was promoted to Captain. He was mustered out in 1865. He is buried in the Military cemetery in Sawtell, California."

The original letters are in the Lincoln Shrine, Redlands, California which is a depository of materials on Lincoln and the Civil War." The curator there states that it is common to have letters from the service men to their wife or mother but it is uncommon to see letters from a soldier to his children.

In October my wife and I will se sailing on the Delta Queen from Nashville to Chattanooga and then returning to Nashville by car and hopefully will have the time to stop at your facility.

Sincerely,


Marvin G. Billings



Head Quarters 1st Brigade
Murfreesboro Tennessee
February 10th 1862.

MISS BENTON
Stella
My Dear Daughter

There is something of a tool shop around here, and you must be careful in handling them that you do not cut your fingers or jam them, as there is no rags or strings to tie them up. When you take any of them to use or look at always put them back just where you find them. All these articles are very useful about a house or farm, and they cost money, or time to make them, which is just the same, and therefore should not be lost, or broken or dulled. They look real nice when they are kept clean and bright, and put away in good order, and so little girls look real pretty when ^{they} are washed clean, and their hair is combed, and their dress is clean and whole, their shoes tied up good so that the strings do not hang on the ground, and their bonnet or hood on their head in good shape.

I expect you are graving very fast, I think you ought to if you are paring the floor, and washing and dressing the other children. Ma says that when she froze her finger, you and George done most all of the work. That was real good children; I wouldn't take \$1000,00 a piece for you! for I don't believe I could find two more that would ^{do} as well. Take good care of these letters and keep them till I get home, and George and Elbat must do so too.

Kiss Ma and the baby for me, and give my respects to Grand ma and Grand pa, and Charles and Manly, and Aunt Alice.

The weather here is warm, and the frogs ~~sign~~ singing all night and this morning too. Pa says "Good By Stella."

Head Quarters 9th Brigade
Camp Andy Johnson, Tenn.
December 18th 1862.

Miss Stella Genevieve Benton

My Dear Daughter

Pa has heard that you are growing fast, that you are doing many things very useful both to yourself and to Mama such as washing dishes and knitting, and also that you are growing good which is the best kind of news to hear. The last that I heard from you was that you were telling George what to write to me: I wonder if you were sitting in that little rocking chair which Pa bought when we lived in Ford & Co's, or whether you was sitting in a big chair with your knitting in your hands. Ma says you could not think of much to write, well, you are not used to writing I know, and then I guess that you try to make it too nice, and think that you must write some big thing, and have it just so.

I know if I was there you would not have to think of what to talk about it would come right to you, well, that is the best way to write; but you are ^{not} as old as you will be in three or four years more when you will know how to write for yourself, and then when Pa goes away from home what nice times we will have writing to each other. Some folks think if Pa stays away from home three years that his children will not know him.

That might be possible, but I guess they would soon get acquainted, don't you? but I think George and Stella will know me, Ma will anyhow and she can give me an introduction to Miss Stella & Mr. George. Why how funny that seems. I sent two pictures home of a man I am well acquainted with, who has been in the army one year and 3 months, and has a wife and six little children at home who, he thinks very much of, and I know he loves them O! a good deal, and I want

you to guess if you can who the man is and tell if you ever saw him.

Fa dont have a guano any more to carry, and may be he will not as long as he stays in the army. I have made a trade of my gun for something that is a good deal lighter and dont kill folks so much. I can handle it with three fingers, or more correctly with two fingers and a thumb; it wears out in a little while unless it is made of gold. Sometimes they are made from things that come from the birds, and sometimes they are made from steel.

If I could get none you would get no letter from me, and Ma would not know where I am, or what I was doing.

Ma says you and George are going to school this winter. Do you both have mittens to wear, and who knit them? Fa would like to know what you wear on your head, and what kind of a dress you wear.

Do you have any shawl or any thing to throw round your shoulders when you go out. Do your feet and legs keep warm in school?

Do you like to study? I am almost afraid that the school is not a good place for you, and you will learn more bad than good. Do you get tired of sitting and wish you could run out doors and play and stir around and jump and run?

I get so sometimes now, as I sit and write most all day and then write two or three hours in the evening.

But I do it willingly to earn mney to make my children and Mother comfortable, to keep them well clothed and enough to eat, and Books and Papers to read, and as many other things as he can to make home comfortable and happy. And I feel well paid when I hear that all the children are improving, and are good to help Ma.

Do you have any little papers to read now? if not I guess
ma will have to send for one, for I know you like to see the
pictures in them and hear the stories read. May be you know
how to read now; I would like to know very much. If you can
read ma had better get two papers, one for you and one for George
of a different kind, and if you keep them nice I can read them
too when I come home, and may be have them bound.

Do you have any slate this winter? Who sits with you in school
and can you tell me the names of all who attend.

I expect you have snow to walk on most all the time; here we
see very little, and the ground is frozen only a little nights and
thaws out in the day time. The sun shines brightly most every
day, and I hear the birds sing every day; the little Blue Birds
and Chickadee and Wood Peckers are around every day.

You would find it very cold living in cloth houses as we do, and
I guess you would find it still colder sleeping on the ground in the
night, and no fire; and have to do your cooking out door too!
how do you think you would like that? Pa does no cooking
or washing just now; he pays black men to do it, and they do
not do it as nice as ma does; but we cannot get any one else
to do our work, we cant ~~cant~~ have our mothers and sisters and
daughters and wives to do it.

I would like to have one of your pumpkin pies to eat
for Christmas Dinner. why only just think of it. if we buy pies to
eat we must pay 20 cts. a piece for them or 50 cts for three, and
they are small and have no sweetening in them.

Last night some of the men brought some oysters and crack-
ers, and we had an oyster supper, and they brought two bottles of

Brandy, and some of them came very near getting drunk.
I did not pay anything for the Brandy nor help drink
it either, as I think it a bad habit, and worse than waste of
money. You and Pa are Temperance folks I know and mean to
be as long as we live. Now I have written you quite a long
letter, and it is most bed time, and I hope you will enjoy
the reading of it as much as I have the writing.

I hope to hear more good news from you and
the other children
Wishing a Merry Christmas to you all
I remain your kind Parent
Elliott H. Benton.

On December 9, 1862 ELLIOTT H. BENTON was handed this special order:

Head Quarters 9th Brigade
Camp Edgfield, Tenn.
9 December 1862

Special Order No. 9

Sergeant E. H. Benton, Co. B, 10th Wis. Vol. is hereby detailed for duty at these Hd. Qtrs. as Quartermaster Clerk and will report without delay to Lt. Ira H. Bird, Acting Brigade Q.M.

By order
B.F. Scribner
Col. Coudy

A.A.A.G.
G.A. Vandegrift

This meant, as said in his letter, that he had traded his gun for a pen. He traveled with the army and wrote messages for staff officers. He now had a tent to sleep in and a man to cook and wash for him.

On December 31 to January 2 the Union Army won a victory at Stone River. It is not known if Grandfather Benton was still with the 10th Ohio or not but it is interesting to note that Col. Burkewas was put in command of the post at Stewart's Creek, a short distance from the field. In his official report, General Rosecrans says, "The 10th Reg. of the Ohio Volunteers, at Sterart's Creek, Lieut. Col. J.W. Burke commanding, deserve especial praise for the ability and spirit with which they held their post, defended our trains, secured their cars, chased away Wheeler's rebel cavalry, saving a large wagon-train and arrested and retained in service some two thousand stragglers from the battle-field."

Murfreesboro Tennessee

March 10th 1863

My Daughter Stella

Pa does not feel as much like drawing pictures as he used to. Do you know how long it took me to read your last letter? I guess you do not, but I can read one every week if I can get them. How many do you think you will write to me before I come home, I have got No. 2. now. How came you to think of numbering them. Ma says you spoke a piece the last day of school, but did not tell me what the piece was about. I want you to tell me. Do you think that you can get the victuals and take care of the baby for this summer, and let ma plant and hoe corn. Which can do the most Ma or George. I think if I was there I would do as much as both of them. Pa bought two cups to day. one is shaped just like a tumbler, and the other has a handle like any other tin cup. Now I can drink my tea and coffee in a nice, shiny, bright clean cup, and it will taste so good. It would make you laugh like every thing to see Pa's cook, and how he gets along; you would not think he was very nice and clean. How would you like to cook and keep house for me, in a tent, and cook out doors when it rains all day, and is all mud all around you. I think you would do better to stay at home, and tend the baby, and wash and comb the children. Pa wrote a "letter" to Johnny a few days ago. Pa is glad to hear that his children are all doing so well. I am getting sleepy Stella, which ever shall I go to bed in. I am glad my children do not have to sleep so near the ground as I do this wet weather. There is a good many Pa's who have to sleep out in the rain to night, and lay on the ground, some of them may take cold. Who will you play with when Ida is gone. Ida's Pa is dead and she will not see him any more. I am sorry for poor Ida. Stella will be a good girl, and help ma all she can. Kiss ma for me, and Grand ma and Grand Pa too.

Your dear Pa,

Murfreesboro, Tennessee

June 6th 1863.

Darling Stella

Pa received a letter from you almost a week ago, and I was very glad that my little girl thought enough of her papa to write him such a nice little letter. Why I can remember not quite a year since, when brother George wrote his first letter to me, and now he writes almost as good as papa or mamma, when he tries real hard; and I think before another year is gone, I shall be getting nice letters from my Darling Stella, as well as from Georgie. It is so nice to hear from the little folks all about the hens and chickens, and the cats and pigs, and all about the baby, how she talks, and how she is learning to stand alone, and to walk. Stella is so good to mamma, to wash the dishes and sweep the floor, and set the table, and take care of ^{the} sweet little Precious baby, that pa loves to please her by writing a letter to her. I can imagine how red her cheeks are, and how good she looks when she has done up her work in the morning and washed and combed herself and the other children, and starts off to school with a "good morning" for her kind ma when she leaves. I wonder if Stella says "good morning" to the school teacher when she meets her, and tries to behave like a little lady! I think she means, and I think she means to be the best scholar in school this summer.

Pa thinks of his girl, so far away, very many times, and hopes that when he comes home, he will find ^{her} just ~~the~~ best girl that ever was. What kind of plays do you have at school this summer, and who do you play with most? Do you make any Doll's houses, and fix them up so nice and pretty, and do you jump the rope, or play "hide and seek".

Which is the tallest, you or Elbert; I expect Elbert grows real fast, ma says he does, and she says he looks very much like pa; is his hair as curly as it used to be before pa left home. I think somebody wrote to me that Ellen had not stopped sucking her thumb yet, is that so, it must look real funny. What is Georgie raising in his garden that will be good for pa to eat if he should happen to come home some time this summer.

Ma says they have commenced a Sabbath School in the school house and there was a good many attend. Pa has a Sabbath School, and the scholars are all big men too, no little girls or boys to sing or vice; we cant have them with us here, where there is so many guns, and swords, and powder, no, the women and children have to stay at home and do the work till their papas come home again. Tell ma that those stockings that she and George knit and sent by Capt. Roby, will last me till next winter, they are so good.

There is a little lamb that stays around my tent, and plays most all the day with a ~~trout~~ big dog, which it likes first rate; they are real good friends and are real happy together, I have never seen them quarrel, which is better than some children do.

You will kiss ma and the baby for me

My love to you always

Your affectionate Parent

Elliott H. Benton

L.M. Surg. 10th Wis. Vol.

Murfreesboro Tenn

Miss Stella G. Benton

Keosaukee

Dodge County

Wisconsin

The Murfreesboro Station of the Army Signal and Telegraph is under C. R. Case of the 36th Indiana, and T. J. Kelly of the 10th Ohio Infantry. The advance of the Army from Murfreesboro was planned by General Rosecrans with one purpose in view, the possession of Chattanooga. The long stay of the Army in Murfreesboro was to collect large volumes of horses, mules, wagons, Army stores and equipment, also clothing for the men. This was the Quartermasters job. It was a long hard march from Murfreesboro to Chattanooga. After the expulsion of Braggs forces from middle Tennessee, the next objective point of the Army was Chattanooga.

Chattanooga, Tennessee,

September 29th 1863.

My Dear Stella

I see that you are doing for Elbert and Ellen what George has done for you, and I am glad of it: that is what makes it pleasant at home: there is no better sight than to see brothers and sisters kind and helping to each other and to their parents. I know you felt real good after you wrote their little letters to pay for them. I sent the money to the office for those books, and told them to direct them to George. He will let you read them, and some day I may send some to you, if you will take good care of them, if you can tell me when your birth day is may be I will send them for a birth day present, or I will send them on Ma's birth day, which would suit you best? Where do you find so many calves in the woods, they must be cheap when all the children can have one. How will you keep them over winter, somebody may have to give you hay to save the calves. What is it that Ellen was taking the pits out and putting on a plate to dry? was it plums? Where did you gather so many hick-nuts, two bushels is a great many, and it will take a good many evenings to crack all of them. I am glad you think so much of the sabbath school and learn so many verses: keep doing so. Did Elbert, and Ellen and John thank you for writing for them, I would, and kiss you too; tell ma she must give you a real sweet kiss on your lips, for me, because I like to get a letter from the little folks. I will write two lines for every one you write to me, or any of the children. Help ma all you can for me, and be kind to every body, pa's little lady every where. Use that slate till you can write real nice to

Your Pa

Bragg evacuated Chattanooga on 9 Sept. and on 16 Sept. he assumed the offensive. Gen. Rosecrans began to concentrate all his armies, McCook - Crittenden - Thomas (Rock of Chickamauga) and Gen. Garfield. Bragg started marching back on 17 Sept., result, the Battle of Chickamauga. The Union troops won. Then the big job of reorganizing and refitting of the troops began. About two weeks later this letter was written. Gen. Rosecrans was relieved of his command and Gen. Thomas took over the Army of the Cumberland. The battle of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge, 25 Nov. 1863 were very important victories for the Union. This opened the way for Sherman's campaign into Georgia and his march to the sea.

Camp Stoneman, D. C.,

May 19th 1865.

My Little Daughter

Very unexpectedly, I received a letter from you this morning, with a few lines from mother. — I am delighted to thank you very much for your letter, and to have my little girl think enough of me to write such good, long letters, and I am pleased to have this opportunity of answering.

How unfortunate you are with your birds, really, you will have to do without birds or do without cats, which would you prefer to keep? I like the singing of birds, and I like to hear pussy purr, then pussy ^{catches} mice and rats, and thereby becomes useful — so kitty is valuable in keeping the house clean of vermin, while birdy is not — but I love birdie the most for his singing and pretty looks, and would like to have both, but to have both, great care and forethought are necessary. it might be useful for you to try it.

What are you raising geese and ducks for? ~~Some of the water is a mile or two from the water.~~ for them, and they need more care and feed than hens, and lay eggs to eat — you must be raising them for the fun of the thing I guess. Do you think ducks and geese prettier than hens? Suppose you raise turkeys, Guinea Hens, Peacocks, what a nice Babel of sounds you would have in your poultry yard.

your good teacher. I know that you try to do what you can for
mother, for when I was home I could see that you were industrious
diligent and reliable, and that you were ready to work and I am
glad of it - glad to see you enjoy play, too, willing to help and care
for the little brothers and sisters around you - some day they can
do much for you and return your kindness - I know the young
Lieut. (as mother calls him) will love his "Sister Stella" and be a good
brother to her.

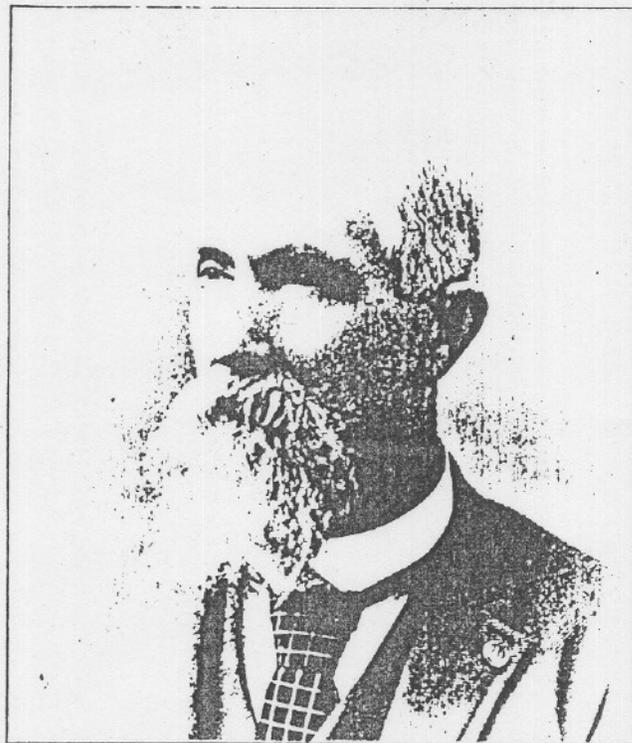
You have not told me who was your teacher in the
Sabbath School, nor who is the Superintendent - I am pleased at your
interest in learning verses, and wish you may remember and prac-
tice their teachings - Do you get any Papers such as came last
year? Have you got it cleaned up all around the house and cellar
and yard, how does George keep things around the house and barn
yard - has he cleaned up along the road by our fence, and got
it nice to walk on? Are the bars kept up and all right.
Kee wrote me that the wheelbarrow had been fixed, and that he
had wheeled manure around all the trees and bushes.

~~weather is cool~~
~~W. a~~
of paper this morning, which grew on the hillside. The letter
which I got from ma. had some flowers in it. I moved my tent
yesterday, and we had a bower put up all along the front of all
three, made of pine and cedar boughs - it is cool and nice -
Last night we had quite a thunder shower, which lasted several

8 O'clock evening.

I quit
an orderly (a soldier on horseback to carry orders) rode up, and told me that the Brig. Q.M. was ready to issue clothing to me. So, I went and got three big wagon loads, and issued it all out to the 10 Companies, and got through before dark, and sat supper out of the time too: among the articles issued were 750 Dress Coats.

It is raining now. I have just been reading a letter from ma and one from Sister Nettie, and a paper from Richmond, printed yesterday. You must write me again soon - I will give you a good sweet kiss for every letter
Your Pa,



ELLIOTT H. BENTON